



# THE WATERMENS SVIT, *Concerning Players.*



He occasions that hath moued me to write this pamphlet are many, and forcible, and the Attempt in writing it aduenturous and full of danger, for as on the one side I doubt not but with truth to stoppe the mouthes of Ignorance and Mallice that haue and doe daily scandalize mee, ( and withall I know I shall purchase a generall thanks, from all honest men of my Company ) so I am assured to gaine the hatred of some that loue me wel, and I affect them no worse, onely for my playne truth and discharging my conscience; But fall back, fall edge, come what can come I am resolu'd and without feare or flattery thus I begin.

In the month of January last 1613. there was a motion made by some of the better sort of the company of Watermen, that it were necessary for the releefe of such a decayed multitude to petition to his Maiesty, that the Players might not haue a play-house in London or in Middlesex, within foure miles of the city on that side of the Thames. Now this request may seeme harsh and not well to be digested by the Players and their Appendixes, but the reasons that mou'd vs vnto it being charitably considered, makes the suite not onely seeme

### Concerning Players.

reasonable, but past seeming most necessary to be sued for, and tollerable to be granted.

Our petition being written to purpose aforesaid, I was selected by my company to deliuer it to his Maiesty and follow the businesse, which I did with that care and integrity, that I am assured none can iustly taxe mee with the contrary. I did ride twise to Theobalds, once to Newmarket, and twice to Roystone, before I could get a reference vpon my petition, I had to beare my charge, of my company first and last, seauen pound two shillings, which horshire horsemeat and mans meat brought to a consumption, besides I wroat seuerall petitions to most of the right honorable Lords of his Maiesties Priuy Counsell, and I found them all compassionly affected to the necessity of our cause.

First I did briefly declare part of the seruices that Watermen had done in Queene *Elizabeths* raigne, of famous memory, in the voyage to Portingale, with the Right Honorable and neuer to be forgotten Earle of *Essex*, then after that how it pleased God ( in that great deliuerance in the year 1588. ) to make Watermen good seruicable instruments, with their losse of lues and limbs to defend their Prince and Country. More ouer many of them serued with Sir *Francis Drak*, Sir *Iohn Hawkins*, Sir *Martin Frobisher* and others, besides in Cales action, the Iland voyage, in Ireland, in the Lowcuntryes, and in the narrow seas they haue beene, ( as in duty they are bound ) at continuall command, so that euery Sommer 1500. or 2000. of them were employed to the places aforesaid, hauing but nine shillings foure pence the month a peece for their pay, and yet were they able then to set themselues out like men, with shift of Aparell, linen and wollen, and forbear charging of their Prince for their pay sometimes fixe months, nine months, twelue months, sometimes more, for then there were so few Watermen and the one halfe of them being at Sea, those that staid at home had as much worke as they would doe.

Afterwards the Players began to play on the Bankside and to

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### *The Watermans suit,*

I haue Playing in London & Middlesex (for the most part) then there went such great concourse of people by water, that the smal number of watermen the remain'd at home were not able to cary them, by reason of the Court, the Tearmes, the players, and other imployments, so that we were inforced and encouraged, (hoping that this golden stirring world would haue lasted euer) to take and entertaine men and boyes, which boyes are growne men, and keepers of houses, many of them being ouer charged with families of Wife and Children, so that the number of Water-men, and those that liue and are maintained by them, and by the onely labour of the Oare and the Skull, betwixt the Bridge of Windsor, and Grauesend, cannot be fewer then forty thousand; the cause of the greater halfe of which multitude, hath beene the Players playing on the Bank-side, for I haue knowne three Companies, besides the Beare-bayting, at once there, to wit, the Globe, the Rose, and the Swan. And it is an infallible truth that had they neuer played there it had beene better for Water-men by the one halfe of their liuing, for the Company is encreased more then halfe by their meanes of playing there in former times.

And now it hath pleased God in this peacefull time, that there is no imployment at the sea, as it hath beene accustomed, so that all those great numbers of men remaines at home, and the Players haue all (except the Kings men) left their vsuall residency on the Bank-side, and doe play in Midelfsex far remote from the Thames, so that euery day in the weeke they doe draw vnto them three or foure thousand people, that were vsed to spend their monies by water, (to the releefe of so many thousands of poore people, which by Players former playing on the Bankside,) are encreased so that oftentimes a poore man that hath fve or sixe children, doth giue good attendance to his labour all day, and at night (perhaps) hath not gotten a Groat to relieue himselfe his wife and familie.

This was the effect and scope of our petition though here

## *The Water-mens suit,*

I haue declared it more at large, to which his Maieſty graciously granted me a reference to his comiſſioners for ſuites, who then were the Right honorable Sir *Iulius Caesar*, Sir *Thomas Parry* Knights, the Right Worſhipfull Sir *Francis Bacon* then the Kings Atorney generall, Sir *Henry Mountague* his Maieſties Seargent at Law, Sir *Walter Cope*, Maister *George Calvert*, one of the Clarks of his Maieſties priuy Counſell, and Barron *Southerton*, one of the Barrons of the Kings exchequer, theſe Honorable and Worſhipfull perſons I did oft ſolicite, by petitions, by friends, and by mine owne induſtrious importunity, ſo that in the end when our cauſe was heard, we found them generally affected to the ſuit we proſecuted.

His Maieſties Players did exhibit a petition againſt vs, in which they ſaid that our ſuit was vnreaſonable, and that wee might as iuſtly remoue the exchange, the walkes in *Pauls*, or *Moorefields* to the Bankſide for our profits as to confine them; but our extremities and cauſe being iudiciously pondered by the Honorable and Worſhipfull Comiſſioners, Sir *Francis Bacon* very worthily ſaid that ſo far forth as the Publike weale was to be regarded before paſtimes, or a ſeruiceable decaying multitude before a handfull of perticular men, or profit before pleaſure, ſo fare was our ſuite to be preferred before theirs. Wherevpon the players did apeale to the Lord Chamberlaine, which was then the Earle of *Sommerſet* who ſtood well affected to vs, hauing beene moued before in the buſineſs by Maister *Samuel Goldſmith* an eſpeciall friend of mine, and a gentleman that my ſelfe and all the reſt of my poore company in generall, are generally beholding and deeply ingaged vnto; for of his owne free will to his coſt and charge, we muſt with thankfulneſſe acknowledge hee hath beene and is continually our worthie friend. Who ſeeing the wants of ſuch numbers of vs, hee hath often neglected his owne vrgent and profitable affaires, ſpending his time and coyne in any honeſt ocaſion that might profit vs. This much I thought good to inſert in the way of thankfulneſs, becauſe of al vices ingratitude is moſt hateful.

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Ben. A. Thayer  
October 11, 1950

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